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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2404

April 30, 2010

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The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates,

I write you with an urgent request for DOD assistance in dealing with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Since April 21st, federal authorities have given BP roughly two weeks to handle the situation. Their efforts thus far have not been successful in controlling the source of the leak and their best estimate to fully contain the leak is approximately 30 additional days. It is time that the full resources of DOD are brought to bear to prevent this catastrophe from getting worse.

One important lesson I learned from Hurricane Katrina was that no government agency should ever assume that they are aware of the full capabilities of other agencies who may be able provide critical support at a time of need. Given the expertise and capabilities of the Navy to conduct operations in deep ocean environments, this service's resources need to be leveraged to the fullest extent. To date, everything I have heard has dealt with the response to the spill on the surface, rather than addressing the source of the oil leak. We are at a critical juncture here. I strongly urge you to utilize the Navy's resources and allow them to take a lead role in this disaster response operation. The taxpayers have invested a tremendous amount of resources and capabilities within the Department of Defense. We need to ensure that every asset available to our government is ready to address this crisis threatening the Gulf Coast.

If you have any questions regarding this request or wish to discuss this in greater detail, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


GENE TAYLOR
Member of Congress